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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to provide an overview of theoretical concepts of civic education and citizenship. The paper discusses recent comparative education research on political socialization and its implications for future research, such as in not fully democratic countries like Malaysia. Based on a literature review and prior research in the region, the role of education as a vehicle for teaching civic education and citizenship is examined. A qualitative research study in Malaysia is proposed to examine the relationship between official policy and actual school practice in the areas of civic education and citizenship. By comparing the views of teachers and students with those of policymakers (and the expectations presented in policy documents), the study compares official policy with what was really taught and learned in the selected educational settings. (Contains 44 references.) (BT)

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Civic Education and Citizenship in Malaysian Education[1]

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Introduction

The goal of this paper is to provide an overview of theoretical conceptions of civic education and citizenship. In addition, this paper discusses recent comparative education research on political socialization and its implications for future research especially in countries like Malaysia that are frequently characterized as not being fully democratic. Based on the literature review and the author's prior research in the region, the role of education as a vehicle for teaching civic education and citizenship is examined. Finally, a qualitative research study in Malaysia is proposed examining the relationship between official policy and actual school practice in the areas of civic education and citizenship. The details of the proposed study are discussed and its implications for educational practice. By comparing the views of teachers and students with those of policymakers (and the expectations presented in policy documents), the study hopes to compare official policy with the "lived reality" of the teachers and students in each educational setting. In this way, it addresses a need identified by Cogan (1998) in his cross-cultural study of policymakers' views of citizenship education indicated that it would be interesting to examine what kind of future youth in schools would envision in the future as contrasted with policymakers.

Theoretical Views of Civic Education and Citizenship

The terms civic education and citizenship have all been used by educators to describe goals of schooling. Civic education has been described in various ways by educators and some make a clear distinction between the terms civic education and citizenship. Murray Print (1999) describes civic education as the study of government, constitutions, institutions, the rule of law and the rights and responsibilities of citizens while citizenship education stresses the processes of democracy including active citizen participation and the engagement of people in a civil society. However, the two ideas are closely related and can be combined in a civics and citizenship education curriculum by stressing the following dimensions:

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1. rights and responsibilities of citizens
2. government and institutions
3. history and constitution
4. national identity
5. legal system and rule of law
6. human, political, economic, and social rights
7. democratic principles and processes
8. active citizen participation in civic issues
9. international perspectives
10. values of democratic citizenship (Print, 1999, p. 12)

Beck (1998) describes the conservative view of civic education as viewing the role of the school as transmitting the basic norms and values of society while Torres (1998) in his review of theories of citizenship argues that the concept relates to every problem of the relations between citizens and the state and among citizens themselves. Engel (2000) does an excellent job of contrasting differing views of civic education and characterizes the conservative perspective as civility in behavior, willingness to subordinate ones own interest for the common good and knowledge of American pluralistic values. Civic education is seen in the conservative conception as promoting a shared obligation among citizens to value the existing political system and, therefore, the emphasis is on preserving civil society and building social capital. Putnam has defined social capital as "features of social life-networks, norms and trust to enable participants to act together to pursue shared objectives (Putnam, 1995, 664-665). However, conservative civic education also discourages challenges to the dominant ideology. In contrast, progressive views of civic education include a deliberation of public issues and a focus on problem solving and community action (Parker, 1996). In addition, both conservatives and progressives do an inadequate job of addressing diversity concerns. Parker (1996) criticizes the minimizing of cultural heterogeneity and the way that "assimilation is built into the common sense of citizenship education as one of its bearing walls" (p. 113). Youniss and Yates (1999) view internalization as a major goal of socialization as problematic since it views youth as passive recipients of knowledge. Others argue that it is much more fruitful to look at the ways in which individuals interpret the "culture-bound frameworks of schools and the ways individuals understand and act in specific social contexts" (Feinberg & Soltis, 1998, p. 81). In addition, according to McLaughlin, merely transmitting broad consensual values is inadequate as an unreflective model of political socialization (cited in Beck, 1998). Also reflective of the neo-conservative view of civic education is the view of the communitarians like Amitai Etzioni who view the task of citizenship as making sure that the language of rights incorporates the language of responsibilities. This emphasis has been seen as problematic by others like Noddings who claim that the emphasis on rights and justice reflect a male bias that does not incorporate feminine conceptions of caring (cited in Torres, 1998). The communitarians view citizenship as essentially collective behavior that is the interpretation and justification of what is in our interest and what we value. They argue that what is essential in a good civic education program is the teaching of civic knowledge, intellectual and participatory civic skills, and civic dispositions (traits of

public and private character). The communitarian network has put forward a position paper on civic education that cites the following five essential questions for Americans to consider:

1. What are civic life, politics, and government?
2. What are the foundations of the American political system?
3. How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?
4. What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?
5. What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?

(Branson & Quigley, 1998)

In contrast to the communitarians, the liberal perspective is well-expressed by Gutmann (1987) who states that education for citizenship should focus on the justification of rights rather than responsibilities but agree that schools should foster general, social, economic, and political virtues. Also, many liberals discount the possibility of effective citizenship in a society where rights are distributed on the basis of group membership arguing that treating individuals with equal rights is required. A major proponent of liberalism is John Rawls who, like Gutmann, stresses the importance of individual liberty. However, Rawls identifies justice as a key principle that is related to the idea of fairness. This principle of justice as fairness is viewed as a political theory of democratic citizenship and discounts the possibility that political life in a liberal democracy can be dominated by one comprehensive view of morality (Rawls, 1998).

According to Kymlicka (1998), the need to promote a sense of solidarity and common purpose in a multicultural state should involve accommodating rather than subordinating national identities. He argues that people from different groups will share allegiance to the state if their identity is nurtured not subordinated. Ultimately, there is always the possibility of tension between the promotion of a national identity and the maintenance of cultural identities. Feinberg (1998) claims that citizenship in a multicultural society means that there is no one example for citizenship education. According to Samson, defenders of minority rights are often suspicious of some ideal of good citizenship that can be merely the view of the majority. Yet, Ward retorts that those who argue for a robust civic virtue and democratic citizenship are often suspicious of appeals for minority rights (cited in Kymlicka & Norman, 2000). This agrees with Banks (1997) who claims that the role of citizenship education in American education has been used by powerful mainstream groups to serve their interests and maintain their hegemony. He asks whether it is possible for citizenship education to promote justice in society or does citizenship education necessarily reproduce the society in which it is embedded. He advocates civic education that is reflective of cultural democracy that recognizes the possibility of multiple identifications and advocates that schools respect and recognizes cultural differences as a way of making students feel part of the national culture. In addition to knowledge about diverse cultures, the school needs to encourage students to be active constructors of social, historical, and political knowledge. Similarly, Pathmanathan & Haas (1994) describe civic education as a process through which citizens become more responsible and active in the processes that structure a democratic

society. However, they reflect the conservative and religious emphasis reflective of Malaysia and argue that religion can play a role in civic education since the broad values promoted are derived from religion.

Engel (2000) also does an excellent job of summarizing the feminist critique of civic education and citizenship. Feminist theory argues that citizenship is a form of moral and ethical behavior that transcends boundaries and rather democratic citizenship is an interactive human relationship that involves feelings of connectedness and caring. According to Mansbridge, a crucial difference between feminist theory and the conservative and progressive approaches is that differences are not suppressed but valued as important. Qualities of listening, empathy, caring, connectedness and emotional commitment are stressed as are issues of gender, racial and economic inequality (cited in Engel, 2000). Feminist theorists argue that dissent and difference are positive and that seeing the point of view of the other is necessary. Identity is thus viewed as fluid and characterized by shifting boundaries (Engel, 2000). Stromquist (2001) has been influential in her work on feminist conceptions of citizenship from a comparative education framework. She critiques the role of the state in allowing the unequal differentiation between men and women. She argues that citizenship is gendered and women are not only excluded from politics but that aspects of women's lives are inadequately represented in society. In addition, despite a lessening of the gender gap regarding access to education worldwide, more needs to be done to combat gender stereotypes, advance the role of women in the curriculum and implement equitable teaching practices.

The nature of citizenship and the school's role in promoting this has also long been the subject of debate. Print's general definition is a good starting point for a discussion of this issue; however, its definition is more complex. According to Niemi & Junn (1998), democratic decision-making is meaningful if citizens understand what is at stake in politics, what their alternatives are and what their position is. Clearly, a functionalist transmission model of schooling which focuses on learning isolated facts would not achieve this goal. In a major cross-cultural study of citizenship, Cogan (1998) identified the following five attributes of citizenship:

1. a sense of identity
2. the enjoyment of certain rights
3. fulfillment of corresponding obligations
4. a degree of interest and involvement in public affairs
5. an acceptance of basic societal values

A sense of identity is often defined in national terms; however, as we have discussed, there often can be tension between national identity and ethnic identities. The rights citizens are entitled to are frequently under debate but these were referred to by Marshall as including legal, political, economic, and social rights (cited in Cogan, 1998). Responsibilities, obligations and duties have been stressed in recent writings of communitarians who believe that liberal democracy contains a built in tendency to maximize individual rights and minimize the pursuit of public interest (Etzioni, 1993). An active citizen also is involved in public affairs despite the fact that this is often not required of citizens. Finally, the acceptance of basic societal values is critical since it

helps constitute national identity and maker social living possible. The critical point to be made in any discussion of civic education and citizenship is that effective citizenship is not unquestioned obedience to whoever is in power nor is it conformity to majority opinion (Cogan, 1998). According to Cogan (1998), "citizenship involves thinking for oneself, while at the same time listening to and respecting the viewpoints of other people, in order to become personally engaged with the problems and issues that confront one's society" (p. 5).

Purpose of Study & Methodology

The study will also examine the policy directions and the teacher and student perceptions of civic education and citizenship education in Malaysia. By focusing initially on the policy documents and Ministry of Education interviews, I can determine what the "official" policy is regarding the content and goals of civic education and citizenship education. The subsequent semi-structured interviews with Social Studies and Moral Education teachers and students in these classes will focus on how "official" policy is interpreted at the classroom level. In addition, the actors in the school will interpret what they understand as critical in the areas of civics and citizenship education. This qualitative study addresses several needs indicated by the research by focusing on the ways in which teachers and students define their roles in civic education and citizenship education and will relate classroom discussions and practices to larger themes of societal values and democracy. Specifically, how do teachers view their roles in teaching civics and citizenship? How do students interpret the formal curriculum, hidden curriculum, class practices and out of school influences to construct their concepts of political identity? Do students perceive a conflict between issues of national identity and ethnic identity? How is policy implemented in Social Studies classrooms and in Moral Education classrooms?

In this study, Social Studies and Moral Education teachers (from schools in Kuala Lumpur) as well as students in these classes will be interviewed to elicit the interpretations of each group toward the concepts of civic education and citizenship education. Male and female students will be chosen who are representative of three major races (Chinese, Malay & Indian) in the country. How teachers interpret messages from the texts and the Ministry of Education will be examined for the ways in which they follow or digress from specified objectives. This research is therefore grounded in microsociology and will examine the importance of cognition as youth make sense of the conflictual world in which they live. The contradictions between the formal curriculum, the hidden curriculum and the messages students receive from outside of the school about the state of democratic practices in society will be analyzed to construct a "picture" of civic education and citizenship education as portrayed by Malaysian adolescents. The rationale for including document analysis and Ministry of Education interviews is to determine the "official" perspective and the ways in which the school is defined by various policymakers and official documents. This source of data has been very useful for qualitative researchers as a way of comparing actual practice with official policy (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Hahn (1998) argues that given the commitment of social studies educators to discussing controversial issues in social studies as a methodology, this needs to be addressed by qualitative research. In addition, the way that teachers run their classes will be analyzed for different dimensions: the level of democratic procedures, discussion of controversial issues, and opportunities for service learning activities will all be documented to see if students are given an opportunity to "practice" democratic procedures in and out of school. These aspects of participation have been identified as critical to the development of positive civic attitudes and elements of citizenship. A limitation of the research will be that teachers and students will be interviewed in English and asked to describe classroom procedures, but classes will not be observed since all classes are conducted in Malay.

Civic education and citizenship in Malaysia

During the British colonial period, the influx of Chinese and Indians transformed the country from a relatively homogeneous society to a plural society with different religions and languages. Education was similarly fragmented and prior to Independence in 1957, this system was viewed as a source of disunity among the ethnic communities. As a result, the National Education Policy of 1957 had a major objective of achieving national unity in part through the promotion of a national language and a common school system. The Federal Constitution reflects some of these concerns and conditions of Malaysian citizenship are incorporated into this document. Actions have been taken to "preserve and sustain the growth of the language and culture of other communities" in keeping with the National Education Policy such as maintaining the Tamil and Chinese primary schools although Chinese medium secondary schools are not government supported (Mukherjee, 1990). According to the Federal Constitution of 1957, Non-Malays were granted citizenship rights but Article 153 of the Constitution stated that it is the responsibility of the King to "safeguard the special position of the Malays and the legitimate interests of other communities" (quoted in Anuar, 1990, p. 39). The special position of the Malays was due to a history of special treatment by the British, their indigenous status and as a way to tackle the problem of Malay poverty by increasing economic equality among the different racial groups in the country. The special position has led to increased opportunities for Malays in government service, scholarships and other educational opportunities and preferential treatment in business permits (Anuar, 1990). In this way, the Chinese and Indians had to acknowledge Malay dominance in exchange for Malaysian citizenship. As we shall see later, the exact nature of Malaysian identity and citizenship has also been reinforced through official documents including the Rukunegara, National Education Philosophy and Five Year Plans.

Attempts at national unity were deemed inadequate after race riots in 1969, which led to the development of a political ideology-the Rukunegara. The ambitious objectives of the Rukunegara included achieving a greater unity of all Malaysians, maintaining a democratic way of life, creating a just society where the nation's wealth could be equally shared, ensuring a liberal approach to Malaysia's rich and diverse cultural traditions, and building a progressive society (Anuar, 1990). The basic principles of the Rukunegara are expressed in five pillars, which can be viewed as defining the goals of the nation:

1. Belief in God
2. Loyalty to King and Country
3. Upholding the Constitution
4. Rule of Law
5. Good Behavior and Morality (Cited in Hashim, 1983)

In addition to the Rukunegara, a national culture policy was formulated with the following characteristics:

> The national culture must be based on the indigenous culture of the region The suitable elements from other cultures can be accepted as part of the national culture. Islam is an important component in the building of the national culture (cited in Anuar, 1990, pp. 55-56)

The national culture policy has been contentiously debated and when it come up for review in the 1980s, the Chinese community voiced its opposition to what it viewed as forced assimilation of non-Malay cultures in the country (see Soong, 1990 for news articles describing this debate).

The educational system has been viewed as critical in promoting the idea of national unity (with a distinctly Malay centered focus) and moral and civic development as evident by various national and educational documents. The National Philosophy of Education stated by the Ministry of Education:

> Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large. (Ministry of Education, 1997)

This emphasis on unity was also stated as a primary objective of the country according to the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975), Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980) and reiterated up through the Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990). The nature of this national identity was defined in the Third Malaysia Plan:

> A national identity is born out of a common set of social norms and values evolved over a period of time....The evolution of a Malaysian national identity will be based on integration of all the virtues from the various cultures in Malaysia, with the Malay culture forming its core (cited in Anuar, 1990, p. 2).

One of the key areas for promoting this conception of national unity was through the teaching of civics and moral education. By 1960, civics was deemed important

enough for the Education Review Committee to suggest that it be an integral part of the curriculum (Jadi, 1997). Civic education in Malaysia was taught as a separate subject through the 1970s until it was phased out as a separate subject when moral education replaced it as a compulsory subject in the 1980s. Jadi (1997) argues that a major goal of Malaysian education is to equip pupils with knowledge and teach Malaysian norms and values reflect the dominant view of civic education and citizenship. Therefore, citizenship education "attempts to instill pupils with the spirit of patriotism and loyalty to the state" (Jadi, 1997, p. 105). The civics curriculum incorporated aspects of the Rukunegara, the Malaysian Constitution and the workings of the government. However, as a non-examination subject, it was considered unimportant and many teachers were not sure how to teach it which led to civics being removed as a separate subject and integrated into the history curriculum. The emphasis on national unity can still be seen in the history curriculum taught in schools. In lower secondary schools, the history curriculum stresses the following:

> Pupils will understand the conditions of the society and the country in creating the spirit of unity and espirit de corps towards society and country as a single unit, to create common memory towards history as a reference towards national consciousness to strengthen the feeling of love towards the country (cited in Jadi, 1997).

Moral Education replaced civics as a required subject in primary and secondary schools. Moral Education was implemented in the 1980s to be taught to non-Muslims while Muslims studied Islamic Education. According to the syllabus, Moral Education "stresses the inculcation and internalization of noble values found in Malaysian society and advocated by the various religions, traditions, and cultures of the different communities and which are consonant with universal values" (Ministry of Education, 1989). The Moral Education Syllabus for secondary schools contains seventeen values which are based "on religious considerations, traditions and values of the multiracial society" as well as the Rukunegara (National Institute for Educational Research, 1990, p. 68). The seventeen core values identified for the secondary level are: compassion, self-reliance, humility, respect, love, justice, freedom, courage, physical, honesty, diligence, cooperation, moderation, gratitude, rationality, public spiritedness and citizenship (Abdul Rasid, Haji Maghribi, & Mohd Taib, 1994). The last value added to the Moral Education syllabus is citizenship that was added in the mid 1990s (Jadi, 1997).

Therefore, the primary goal of education in Malaysia continues to be a shifting of allegiance from the ethnic group to the nation as a whole as evidenced by two research studies focusing on the analysis of Malaysian textbooks. However, this emphasis has been criticized as disenfranchising the non-Malays who may feel discriminated against in the current system. As Glad (1998) questioned in her study of Chinese primary schools, can the preservation of Chinese identity be compatible with being a loyal, patriotic Malaysian citizen? Or is the function of the nationalist ideology advocated by citizenship education merely a tool to legitimate the rulers of society and Malay dominance. Glad found that Malaysian textbooks were too prescriptive and presented idealized presentations of reality. In addition, the teacher-centered pedagogy focuses on inculcating moral habits and not encouraging discussions of controversial issues or moral dilemmas.

Anuar (1990) has also identified similar contradictions in his analysis of the cultural, economic and political aspects of Malaysian textbooks. One text discusses equality as a fundamental liberty and that every Malaysian should be treated equally under the law. The text also stresses that there should be no discrimination based on religion, race, origin, or place of birth, however, the one exception is article 153 of the Constitution that discusses the special position of the Malays. Since the State is so involved with the publication and representations of national symbols, myths and values through textbooks, certain key themes are emphasized (e.g.-Malay culture and dominance, Islamic culture, etc.) while others are minimized. Anuar also suggests that attempts at political indoctrination can be resisted by some students who are also influenced by teachers, social relations and the mass media. Finally, Anuar suggests that certain controversial issues such as the New Economic Policy, the national culture policy, the special position of the Malays and national security efforts that curtail individual rights and liberties (e.g.-Internal Security Act) should be discussed rather than avoided as "sensitive issues".

Currently, researchers are asking what is the current role of civic education and citizenship for preparing future citizens? Many Pacific Rim countries have been identified as needing greater democratization and a more active civic education rather than one in which a limited government perspective is reinforced (Print, 1999). Malaysia tends toward a model that highlights public values binding on all persons that are inculcated through the education system and schools are to "transmit" the basic norms and values of society. The tension between nations is also evident in how one defines the debate that is often framed as a conflict between Western values and Asian values. Dr. Mahathir has been critical of Western attempts to influence policy in Malaysia stating that no one country has a right to claim a monopoly on wisdom as to what constitutes human rights (Birch, 1998). Advocates of an Asian style democracy cite a set of Asian cultural values that favor authoritarianism and justify the suppression of political rights in favor of economic growth (Santiago & Nadrajah, 1999). The "Asian values" defense of authoritarianism has been critiqued by Sen (1999) who states that there is little evidence that the suppression of political and civil rights are beneficial in encouraging economic development. As documented by the Malaysian Human Rights Report (1998), opposition is tolerated to a point in Malaysia but widespread limitations on political and human rights exist. The government control of the press, the subordination of the Parliament to the Prime Minister and the Internal security Act are examples of how the government can wield its power to deny fundamental political rights in Malaysia. The question then becomes what role does civic education and citizenship play in such a restricted environment? Is there any opportunity to question the existing system as not living up to the ideals of equality and democracy? How much recognition is given to the non-Malay cultures and communities in the curriculum? Are schools making any attempts to implement democratic classroom and school practices or is the system maintaining an authoritarian orientation? Since the "special position" of the Malays has been defined as sensitive in nature and not open to debate in Malaysian society, what other areas have also been so categorized? How can a viable opposition to the ruling party be developed in such a restrictive environment?

Cross-cultural Political Socialization

There has been a wealth of research that has focused on political socialization in American schools as well as numerous international studies. Since the focus of my study will be Malaysia, I will only refer to a summary of American findings compiled by Ehman (1980) and concentrate the literature review on international studies of political socialization. Ehman wondered how important the school was compared to other political socialization agents and concluded that schools had an important impact on the political knowledge of students but less of an influence on political attitudes and participation. His review of the literature reported some other key findings:

1. Secondary school civics and government curriculum has no noticeable impact on the political attitudes of students except racial minorities
2. The teacher has some influence on the political attitudes of youth
3. Classroom climate has a powerful influence on student attitudes (political attitudes related to open classroom climate and discussion of controversial issues)
4. Participation in school governance and extra curricular activities is related to political attitudes of students
5. More participant and less authoritarian climates are linked to more positive political attitudes and behavior of students (Ehman, 1980).

Earlier examples of political socialization research in the1960s and 1970s often focused on the macro level and were concerned with the processes used to instill individuals with concepts, attitudes, and values used to sustain the political system. Torney et al. (1975) reported on the findings of the 1971 study conducted of civic education conducted by the IEA. After a factor analysis of attitudinal scales, several independent clusters appeared including support for democratic values, support for the national government and civic interest/participation. A regression analysis of the IEA data also showed that an open classroom climate was a positive factor in civic education across countries. Despite wide variance cross-culturally between civic education programs, those that stress the expression of opinion rather than rote and ritual appear more successful in attaining cognitive and attitudinal goals. This early IEA study of civic education concluded that open classroom climates fostered positive political attitudes while closed climates encouraged negative attitudes (Torney et al, 1975; Torney-Purta & Schwille, 1986).

Flanagan, Bowes, Johnson, Csapo, & Sheblanova (1998) studied factors related to the development of civic commitment of adolescents in seven transitional democracies. In part, the study assessed the importance adolescents attach to public interest as a personal life goal. Schools act as "mini-polities" where children learn what it means to be part of a community (including ideas about rights and responsibilities of citizenship). The study also attempted to examine dimensions of school climate including adolescent identification with the school and how authority is negotiated in classes. The results of the study showed that the influence of families was most significant as an indicator of adolescent civic commitment. The next most important factor was whether or not

students felt a sense of membership in a caring school community. Overall, the study stresses the metaphor of a social contract and the idea of reciprocity in citizenship, that is, it is likely that students who feel a sense of identification with the school may have a broader commitment to society.

The most influential comparative education work recent done in the area of civic education and citizenship has been conducted by the IEA and led to two substantive reports on civic education across countries (Civic education across countries: Twenty-four national case studies from the IEA civic education project & Citizenship and education in twenty-eight countries: Civic knowledge and engagement at age fourteen). Phase I of the IEA civic education study (1999), researchers collected documentary evidence on the circumstances, contents, and processes of civic education and the views of experts on what 14 year olds should know about a variety of political and civic issues. The study distinguished between two dimensions of civic education: the policy level and the individual level. The policy level reflects the process of transmission of public knowledge and values related to political and social cohesion. The individual level reflects that those who live in a given society internalize and act upon only a portion of the public knowledge and values put forth by policymakers. Although these studies have found considerable similarity cross-culturally in civic education they have also stressed the importance of specific social and historical contexts within countries. At the societal level, the study focused on "a complex array of factors that potentially affect the transmission of knowledge and learning about citizenship, government, and political processes." (Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999, p. 15). At the individual level, the study focused on how students understand and act upon what is presented to them by the broader societal constructs. Phase I involved twenty-four mainly European countries and utilized initial national case studies followed by a cross-cultural survey (Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999). Some of the key findings of Phase I of the 1999 IEA civic education study are the following:

1. Students in most countries have an understanding of fundamental democratic values and institutions but depth of understanding is a [problem
2. Young people agree that good citizenship includes the obligation to vote
3. Students with the most civic knowledge are most likely to be open to participate in civic activities
4. Schools that model democratic practice are most effective in promoting civic knowledge and engagement
5. Aside from voting, students are skeptical about traditional forms of political engagement
6. Youth organizations have untapped potential to positively influence the civic participation of young people
7. Students are drawn to television as their source of news
8. Patterns of trust in government related institutions vary widely among countries
9. Students are supportive of the political rights of women and of immigrants
10. Gender differences are minimal with regard to civic knowledge but substantial in some attitudes
11. Teachers recognize the importance of civic education in preparing young people for citizenship

12. Diverse patterns of civic knowledge and attitudes toward democratic participation are found in both newly democratic countries and long established democracies (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001, p. 176).

Phase II of the IEA study did not try to identify a single best definition of citizenship or advocate a particular approach to civic education rather it looked for areas of similarities cross-culturally like Phase I which showed there was a core of agreement across democratic societies regarding major civic education topics. Phase II surveyed 90,000 fourteen year olds in twenty-eight countries on topics ranging from knowledge of democratic principles to attitudes toward government and willing ness to participate in civic activity (Torney-Purta et al, 2001).

Recent research has added qualitative dimensions to research and is more reflective of an interpretivist paradigm. This research addresses a need identified by Hahn (1998) who argues that it would be interesting to examine student and teachers opinion of civics taught in school. By focusing more on the micro level, this study reflects how individuals construct meaning about the political world. Researchers in this tradition analyze interviews with children and adolescents to demonstrate that individuals actively construct meaning. This study utilizes some of the framework used by the recent IEA study in that the major framing questions used by the IEA are also used here as guidelines for the semi-structured interviews. Of course, like the IEA studies and the work of Hahn (1998), I utilize the frameworks and methodologies of a comparative educator although the focus of this study is on one country. The study is by no means as comprehensive in nature as the major recent studies of civic education and citizenship conducted by the IEA.

What makes research in Malaysia interesting is that, unlike the democracies studied in the IEA studies, in many ways Malaysia limits individual freedoms despite there being democratic procedures in place. In addition, critics of Dr. Mahathir state that he has used the "Asian values" debate to justify oppressive policies. Specifically, the argument has been made that in order to increase stability between the different ethnic groups and foster economic development, Malaysia is not ready for the kinds of political and civil rights found in Western democracies. This view has also been tempered with criticisms of the West for meddling at various times in the internal policies of the country.

The question is then raised what role does civic education and citizenship play in a society which limits some basic human rights? Also, American researchers stress the importance of democratic education and democratic decision making as critical in preparing students for active citizenship. They lament the lack of democracy in many American social studies classrooms and the tendency to view social studies education as merely a series of facts to be memorized. Indeed, many studies have pointed out that rote and ritual are detrimental to learning civics (Torney et al 1975; Powell & Powell, 1984; Sidelnick, 1989).

Conclusion

There are several issues that arise when attempting to study civic education and citizenship in Malaysian education. One factor is the conservative nature of this area in the Malaysian context given the generally functionalist view of schooling. The stressing of shared norms and values, religious education, and the situating of citizenship as a value in the moral education curriculum lead one to wonder how much opportunity is given in classrooms for democratic practice and the questioning of government policies and the role of democracy. Is civic education and citizenship merely a way to perpetuate the status quo and "transmit" a dominant ideology? When one looks at the literature, one wonders if there are opportunities for students to actively practice citizenship in schools through extracurricular activities? In addition, are students given the opportunity to question the view of the government that is so prevalent through a media that is essentially government controlled? Finally, given the fact that there are laws in Malaysia limiting the human rights of individuals and limiting the discussion of "sensitive issues", how can controversial issues in history be discussed? Given the recent cries of "reformasi" and the questions raised by the treatment of Anwar Ibrahim, how can the schools deal with this issue without questioning the legitimacy of the current government?

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